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Guardian

MARCH 1999

CLAIM WORKSHOP IMPROVES TEAMWORK

By Kathy Rowsey

In February, the Claim Department managers and supervisors completed a three-day team building and leadership skill workshop at Mountain Meadow Inn in Helena. Frank Graham and Mike Gottleib facilitated and tailored the workshop for State Fund.

Several supervisors commented on how they felt they were too busy to attend the training, but they gained a new perspective and new tools to help them handle the daily tasks which kept them so busy in the first place. Everyone learned to focus on the positive and came away with a greater understanding of each other.

Claim managers believe supervisors have excellent skills, but they also felt team unity could be improved. The environment allowed everyone to share thoughts openly and to really listen to one another. The workshop served to improve trust, create a cohesive team, and provide direction.

Those attending learned several ways to help unify the team. They learned to view themselves as a team, not individuals; they realized everyone has the same goals, just different perspectives; they learned to help others, and ask for help when needed; and they learned to recognize and appreciate that people have different strengths and weaknesses. Specialized claim managers including John Thomas, Doreen Kambich, and Wayne Dillavou commented on how they don't regularly interact with claim supervisors. They now believe they will work with supervisors on various projects in a way that will enhance the whole team. "We learned how to coach both up and down. I feel a lot better about the trust issue and I know our concerns were heard and were valued," said Sam Heigh.

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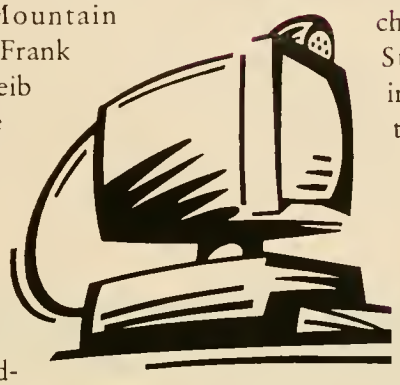
NEW LOOK FOR THE INTRANET



If you haven't had a chance to look around State Fund's new intranet site, take some time and check it out! If you don't have an intranet icon on your desktop, contact Vi in MIS (6504).

The new intranet site has been up for a few weeks. The site was re-designed with the goal in mind to create a user-friendly site that is easy to navigate. We hope employees find this is the case and are easily able to access information.

Keep in mind the intranet is always a work in progress. Please let Chuck Christiansen or Shannon Copps know if you have any suggestions on how to improve the site or ideas on additional information to include.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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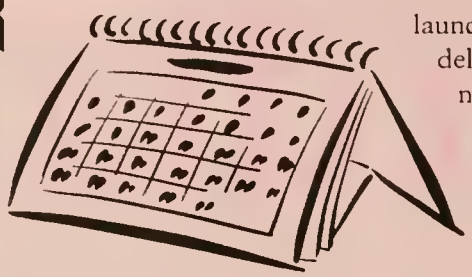

As it becomes clearer that the launch of the PAALS/AMPS will be delayed, we have decided to implement a contingency plan that will ensure that the State Fund is able to successfully execute the policy renewal process and prepare for any Year 2000 contingencies. MIS is spearheading this project with the assistance of Computer Consulting Corporation.

Launching PAALS/AMPS is still our number one priority but we realize that problems remain to be solved. Most importantly, we want this new system to operate accurately with needed critical functionality, guaranteeing the best possible service to our customers. We are focused on achieving a mid-June implementation.

The contingency plan will encompass approximately 200 programs and will ensure the continued functionality of the policy services system. Renewal is a multiple step process that begins May 7 and runs through June 12. Changes implemented through the contingency plan will create fiscal year 2000 data for all policies. Due to time constraints, cosmetic problems will not be addressed. Quality assurance testing on the plan began Wednesday, March 31.

Our thanks go to the multidisciplinary team that is working hard to develop the contingency plan and have it up and running soon.

KUDOS KOLUMN

A customer recently asked an independent auditor (during an audit!) to relay his happiness with the State Fund. He complimented State Fund on our decreased rates and the way employees respond to his questions on billing and reporting.

A policyholder stopped in to see Nanette Preszler recently and asked that she pass on a compliment to CSU. He wanted to let everyone who answers the phone know that he appreciates their courtesy and all the help he receives from them. He had nothing but good things to say about how friendly and helpful CSU is when he calls.

Does someone you know deserve a KUDO? E-mail the message to Shannon Copps for publication in the Guardian.

EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Congratulations to Mitzie Saltzman, Customer Service Representative and the February Employee of the Month.

Mitzie does her best to help wherever and whenever help is needed. She is always supportive of her co-workers and is a positive influence. One co-worker says, "it is amazing that Mitzie truly seems unaware of what a valuable member she is to her customer service team."

Her co-workers also report on the remarkable amount of professional growth Mitzie has experienced in the last year. She gains skill and confidence every day and works hard at being positive—even with the more difficult calls. She constantly works to improve her performance including claim accuracy, statistical coding, and policy service knowledge.

A co-worker sums up how much Mitzie deserves this award, "Mitzie is a great team player and a hard worker. I am honored to have her as a co-worker and a positive role model."

Thanks, Mitzie, for all your hard work in CSU and your dedication to State Fund!

TEAMWORK WORK

Ten rules for positive working relationships:

1. Be friendly and cheerful. It takes 72 muscles to frown and only 14 to smile.
2. Listen more than you talk. Ask questions and really listen!
3. Be calm and remember the way you say something is more significant than what you say. When nonverbal messages conflict with verbal, the nonverbal will prevail.
4. Keep an open mind and avoid defensiveness.
5. Maintain a balance between constructive criticism and praise. When giving guidance, be sure it is constructive. Watch for opportunities to give sincere praise—and give it.
6. Remember it is amazing what you can accomplish when you don't care who gets the credit.

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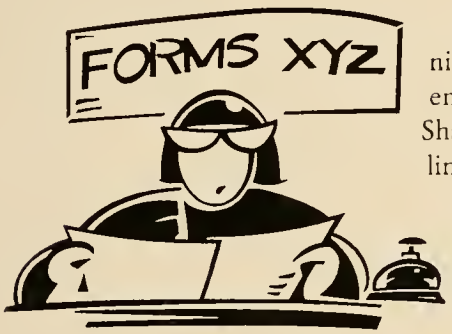
WE'RE REMODELING!

By Morgan Hahn



In our continued effort to communicate quickly and effectively with all employees at Montana State Fund, Shannon Copps has created some new links between our Intranet site and the human resource documents you now find in the Shareprm/Hrinfo directory. We will slowly be removing items from the share directory and placing them on the Intranet. This will be a faster, and hassle-free way to access the information you need, when you need it! We've kept all your "favorites" such as PPRP forms and calendar of events, Collective Bargaining Agreement, human resource policies, and other forms that we use on a regular basis.

Keep watching for additional information to be added to the Intranet. We would appreciate your feedback on the look of our new links, or comments on the Intranet in general. If there are some policies, forms, or other documents you would like to see posted to the Intranet, please contact Morgan Hahn or Shannon Copps. We'd love to hear from you!

Claim Workshop, continued from page 1.

Supervisors also believed the workshop improved team unity. "I gained a clearer understanding of management decisions and have more confidence in our overall direction," commented Kevin Bartsch. Mary Martinez states, "I now have a better view of how we impact the success of the State Fund overall. I see myself as part of a management team and feel more valued as a supervisor." Previously, supervisors believed change started at the executive level and by the time it reached them, they were expected to implement the change when they didn't yet understand the decision. Now, supervisors are able to look at decisions in a positive way; they realize change is caused by actual business factors, not someone's perception. "We usually look at only one piece and we need to look at the whole picture. We need to take the time to really see the changes that need to be made," commented Cris McCoy. Both managers and supervisors are committed to open and honest communication and going directly to the source when a decision is not understood.

Supervisors asked members of their unit to complete a leadership inventory of their strengths and weaknesses as a leader. This provided supervisors with an excellent tool for important feedback and ways to improve their leadership skills. As a result of this workshop to improve management/supervisor team unity, supervisors will work on strengthening the unity within their units.

All those attending believe the workshop was positive, and an excellent reminder of leadership skills. Managers and supervisors continue to challenge themselves to apply the skills they have learned, strengthen team unity, and maintain quality leadership.

TRAINING CALENDAR

Essentials of Management—April 1, 6, 14, 21, 22, 27, 28; 8:30-4:30

Team Building—April 8; 9-10:30

Employee Assistance Program (VRI) for Employees—April 12; 9-9:30

Employee Assistance Program (VRI) for Supervisors—April 12; 9:30-10

Change & Transition (VRI)—April 13; 1:30-3

Getting to Know Legal Department, part 2—April 26; 9-10

PPRP Training for Employees—May 3; 8-11

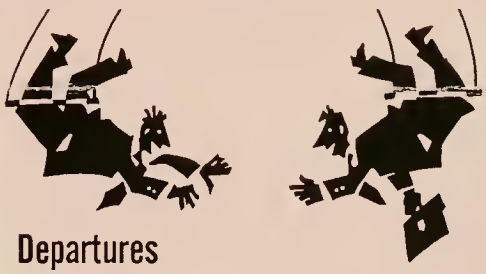
PPRP Training for Supervisors—May 4; 8-11

HUMAN RESOURCES

Personnel changes as of March 31, 1999

New Hires

Wes Winden (HR & Comm)
April Miller (Legal)
Amanda Krissovich (Legal)



Departures

Tanya Kent (UW)
Greg Bryan (Claim)
Hank Worsech (Claim)
Sarah Bennett (Claim)
Bonnie Rouse (UW)
Carla Irby (HR & Comm)

NEW EMPLOYEES

Justin Jones recently joined State Fund as an MIS Network Technician. Before joining State Fund, Justin spent three years in the Navy, stationed in San Diego, where he worked as an instrument repair and calibration technician. Justin has also worked as a fly fishing guide on the Big Hole and Beaverhead Rivers. He recently graduated from Montana Tech with a degree in Business Information Technology. Justin's hometown is Sidney and he enjoys fly fishing, rafting, bird hunting, and camping.

April Miller has joined the Legal Department as a Senior Paralegal. April has also worked at Luxan & Murfitt and A. Paul Blunt, Esq. as a paralegal and is currently a licensed realtor with Helena Real Estate. She received an AS degree in Legal Assisting/Paralegal and plans to finish a degree in Psychology by Spring 1999. April is a member of the National Association of Legal Assistants. She is from Billings and recently moved back to Montana after ten years in Phoenix. April enjoys spending time with her four-year-old daughter and interior decorating.

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Teamwork works, continued from page 2.

7. Keep others informed in a positive way. Avoid promises, but when you do make a commitment, be dependable.
8. Avoid gossip, negative comments about others, and the spreading of rumors.
9. Be sensitive and considerate regarding the limitations, feelings, and anxieties of others.
10. Hold others in high esteem.

Editor: Chuck Christiansen
Managing Editor: Shannon Copps
Employee Reporters:
Kathy Rowsey Karen Wegner
Jay Phillips

Please call 444-6502 with comments or suggested articles.

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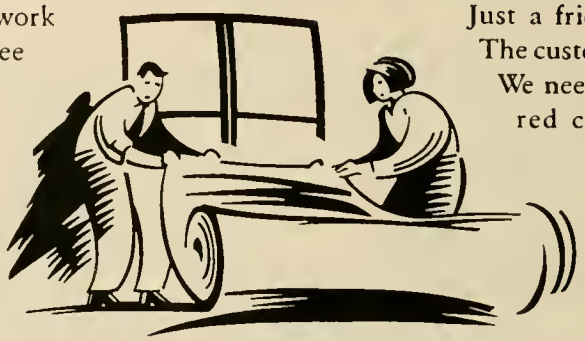
CUSTOMER SERVICE



Just a friendly reminder: The customer comes first. We need to roll out the red carpet for every customer!

In the day to day bustle, it's sometimes easy for people to lose sight of putting the customer first.

If you or a co-worker starts to lose sight of your purpose, keep in mind these points. Customers are:

- Not dependent on us. We are dependent on them.
- Not an interruption of work. They are the purpose of work.
- Doing us a favor when they call. We are not doing them a favor by serving them.
- Integral parts of our business; not outsiders.
- Not cold statistics. They are human beings with feelings and needs like our own.
- Not people to argue or match wits with.
- People who bring us their wants. It's our job to satisfy those wants.
- The lifeblood of our business.